CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE HABITAT RELATIONSHIPS SYSTEM
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M089 White-eared Pocket Mouse Perognathus alticolus
Family: Heteromyidae Order: Rodentia Class: Mammalia

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

The white-eared pocket mouse historically has been found in isolated, montane areas in the Tehachapi Mts., and in the San Bernardino Mts. in the vicinity of Strawberry Peak. Its elevational range is 1070-1800 m (3500-5900 ft). The white-eared pocket mouse is poorly known, but appears to be a scarce resident in ponderosa and Jeffrey pine habitats, and uncommon in mixed chaparral and sagebrush habitats. It recently has been captured in a fallow field dominated by Russian thistle. Apparently no specimens have been collected since 1938 in the San Bernardino Mts.; this population may no longer exist.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Feeds on plant seeds, probably preferring various grass seeds, and perhaps some insects. Forages on open ground and beneath shrubs.

Cover: Burrows are constructed in loose soil. The closely related Great Basin pocket mouse is more common in denser shrub habitats.

Reproduction: A nest of dried grass is built in a chamber of the underground burrow.

Water: No data found. Probably does not require free water.

Pattern: Grinnell (1933) stated that the species occupies dry, open pine forest where bracken fern grows. Current pattern is unclear.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Nocturnal. Aestivates in very hot weather, and hibernates in very cold weather.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: None.

Home Range: No data found.

Territory: No data found.

Reproduction: No data found. Reproduction of related P. parvus is March to April, with peak in June. Gestation likely 21-28 days. Litter size ranges 3-8 with average of 5. Weaning likely within 3 wk.

Niche: Likely predators include foxes, coyotes, weasels, owls, and snakes.

Comments: The white-eared pocket mouse, like the yellow-eared pocket mouse, probably represents a relict distribution of P. parvus in California. P. parvus is endemic to sagebrush habitats; P. alticola and P. xanthonotus also inhabit chaparral-sagebrush habitats. Inferences about life history of P. alticola and P. xanthonotus from data on P. parvus probably are correct and are used extensively above. James Sulentich and David Huckaby of California State University, Long Beach investigated P. alticola, and captured only 3 specimens in extensive trapping in 1979 and 1980. The species may be in danger of extinction.

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Williams, D. F. 1986. Mammalian species of special concern in California. Calif. Dept. Fish and Game, Sacramento. Admin. Rep. 86-1. 112pp. 2 litters may be raised, but usually there is 1, or none in poor years (Iverson 1967, Schreiber 1973). Weaning occurs at about 3 wk. Sexual maturity usually occurs in spring following birth, although in exceptional years subadults may breed (Speth et al. 1968, O'Farrell et al. 1975).

Niche: A small-bodied granivore occurring largely in sagebrush habitats. Competitors for seed resources include other heteromyids and cricetids. Predators include snakes, owls, and predatory mammals. Parasites include 6 mites, 3 fleas, and 3 ticks (Allred 1963, Allred and Beck 1963a, 1963b, Beck et al. 1963, Allred and Goates 1964, Beck and Allred 1966, Egoscue 1966). In south-central Washington, the majority of individuals sampled had pathogenic diseases, including visceral nematodes, increased hemopoiesis, and focal leucocyte aggregates (O'Farrell 1975). Northern range limit of P. parvus probably determined by period of cold winter temperatures and accompanying reduction in period favorable for seed gathering and reproductive cycle (Iverson 1967).

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